

# NOTES & QUOTES

Volume 20, Issue 12 & Volume 21, Issue 1

DECEMBER 2007 & JANUARY 2008

## OUT OF AFRICA

Bishop Thomas A. Skrenes

tskrenes@nglsynod.org



In November, Dar es Salaam is beginning its summer. The temperature sneaks above 100 degrees in mid-day; the humidity in tropical coastal Africa is very high, and this city, the size of Chicago, is very much alive. For two weeks my wife, Luanne, and I, along with Pastor Peter Andersen and his son, Philip, (Christ the King, Escanaba) and Roger and Kay Knuth (Immanuel, Rhineland) traveled in Tanzania. It was an important faith journey.

We were present in our companion diocese in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania to participate in the installation of our friend, Bishop Alex Malasusa, as Presiding Bishop of the Tanzanian Church. You will remember Bishop Malasusa as our guest at the 2005 Synod Assembly when we met in Marquette. For two weeks in 2005, the Bishop and his wife, Ericah, spent time in our Synod and were our house guests in Ishpeming. He is a warm and engaging leader. Our personal friendship has grown, and so we were delighted to respond to the Bishop's request to attend his installation as Churchwide Bishop when he was elected to that office last July.

It was a wonderful day on Sunday, November 11, for the five-hour worship service. It featured speeches by the Tanzanian President (a Muslim) and the former Presiding Bishop, as well as Bishop Malasusa. As you can imagine, the music was great. I was given the honor to preach his installation sermon, and I chose John 21:15-17 as the text, with the sermon title "Feed My Sheep." There were 4,000 to 5,000 persons present at the service, including about 40 bishops. I had fine conversations with the Swedish and German bishops, as well as about 35 other bishops from Africa. A hero of mine, Bishop Manas Buthelezi, was also present. This South African retired bishop was a leader of the Anti-Apartheid movement in his country for a generation. I have known of, and admired, his fearless witness to the Gospel since I was in seminary thirty years ago. We had a wonderful conversation!

Bishop Malasusa is now a leader of the second largest Lutheran Church in Africa. The church continues to grow at least 10% per year. New congregations are being created throughout the country. The churches are full, and populated with young people. There are people over 60 years of age in church, but they are easily outnumbered by young families and individuals.

The Church faces huge issues. The poverty of Africa looms large. Malaria and HIV-AIDS are devastating. Corruption in the government and in other parts of African life is legen-



1029 N. Third St., Ste. A

Marquette, MI 49855

906/ 228-2300

906/ 228-2527 fax

ngls@nglsynod.org

www.nglsynod.org

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

BISHOP'S PAGES 1-4

TRANSITIONS 4

PASTOR JENNIE JOHNSON WREGE 6

SYNOD FINANCIALS 7



*“Please pray for  
Bishop Malasusa  
and his family  
for the strength  
to lead God’s  
people.”*



**A blessed  
Christmas  
and New  
Year to all!**

### THOMAS A. SKRENES, BISHOP (CONTINUED)

dary. The Church struggles with issues of leadership. At age 47, Bishop Malasusa is the youngest of the nation’s 20 Lutheran bishops. He is a big man physically, and the expectations on this “Tanzanian King David” are huge. Please continue to pray for our brothers and sisters in Tanzania that the Spirit may blow anew through this Church and strengthen the bonds between us and our African sisters and brothers. Please pray for Bishop Malasusa and his family for the strength to lead God’s people.

### AFRICAN NOTES

+While in Dar es Salaam, all six of us had opportunity to meet with our “companion congregations.” Pastor Peter Andersen and Philip spent several days with the people of Magogoni Lutheran Church, the companion of Christ the King in Escanaba, and Roger and Kay Knuth enjoyed time with Mbagala Lutheran Church, the companion congregation of Immanuel in Rhineland. Luanne and I visited with Matumbi Lutheran Church. Ask us about our experiences.

+Among other institutions of the Church, the Northern Great Lakes Synod guests visited the Kisarawe Lutheran Junior Seminary where over 200 young people are enrolled in secondary school. Our Synod has been instrumental in building a library and supporting it, along with United States Foreign Aid grants received through the hard work of Pastor Robert Langseth. We are happy to report that the Synod-built library is being well used, and that the new dining hall and kitchen (funded also by the U. S. government) is under construction.

+Bishop Malasusa, Assistant to the Bishop George Fupe (our Synod guest in May 2007), my wife, Luanne, and I visited the American Embassy in Dar. We had an hour private meeting with the American Ambassador, Mark Green. Ambassador Green is a Green Bay native (he was the Republican candidate for Wisconsin Governor in 2006), and I have known him from my work at Badger Boys State. Ambassador Green assured us that the good efforts that non-profits and faith communities are doing in Africa are absolutely critical to the Tanzanian future.

+Warm greetings to all of you from the Kijitoyama Lutheran Church, their elders and its pastor, Rev. Hoyce Mbowe. The choir was with us this spring as they sang their way across our Upper Peninsula and Northeastern Wisconsin area. We had the privilege of hearing the Kijitoyama Choir on a number of occasions while in Africa. They are thrilled to have been with us in this Synod in May.

+Luanne and I were honored to be asked to be Godparents for the youngest child born to Bishop Alex and Mrs. Ericah Malasusa. Our Goddaughter’s name is Mercy, and she is very beautiful! We now have an African daughter. Thanks be to God.

### WE ARE IN OUR NEW OFFICE !

We have boxes! We have new rooms, shelves and a lot of unpacking to do - but we are back in our “new” office at 1029 N. Third Street. The Synod Office has been in “diaspora” for almost a full year. Thanks be to God and to Messiah Lutheran Church for making all of this happen. Our thanks to the congregations who made a special financial gift for new furniture, fixtures and equipment. It will take us some time to get back to normal, but we are excited to be in our own space. A special word of “thanks” to our office staff, Kay Benedict, Louise Ingalls and

**THOMAS A. SKRENES, BISHOP (CONTINUED)**

Betsy Koski, and to my Assistant, Pastor Jennifer Johnson Wrege. They have all shown leadership in this transition time. An open house and dedication will occur in the New Year. We will invite you!

**GOD'S MONEY AT WORK IN THIS CHURCH**

Where does God's money go? The 94 congregations of our Northern Great Lakes Synod will entrust about \$1,000,000 in regular benevolence to the Synod in fiscal 2007. God's people are generous! **Here is where this money goes:**

**\$540,000 (54%) - Ministry through the Churchwide office of the ELCA.**

Missionaries all around the world will be supported, new ministries in the U.S. begun, including at least 30 new congregations, seminaries supported, dozens of other effective churchwide and ecumenical ministries operated. This money directly supports Gospel work throughout the United States and into the world.

**\$120,000 (12%) - Partnerships with Lutheran Campus Ministry, Seminaries and other regional and ecumenical ministries.** Northern Michigan Campus Ministry and Michigan Tech both have campus ministries partially funded by our benevolence. Wartburg Lutheran Seminary in Dubuque and Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago receive strong support from our Synod. Cooperative ministries with other Christian organizations also receive these dollars.

**\$340,000 (34%) - Synod Programs, Personnel and Synod Office.** Helping congregations with evangelism, youth ministry, mission outreach, and stewardship takes staff time and money. Providing support for candidates for ordained and other rostered ministries requires significant effort. Assisting congregations securing pastors, helping congregations in conflict and supporting the work of the whole church is part of the work of the Synod. The salaries and benefits of the Bishop, Assistant to the Bishop, Synod Youth Coordinator, Office Manager, Secretary, Bookkeeper and Planned Giving Counselor are supported by our offerings. Our Synod Office is maintained in Marquette to assist us all with our ministries.

Another \$500,000 is received from the congregations in specific mission support. This money is "passed through" to the ELCA Hunger program, Fortune Lake, Lutheran Social Services, Lutheran World Relief, Companion Synod work and a host of other important life giving ministries. Thank you for doing God's work and supporting these important efforts.

**END OF THE YEAR, BEGINNING OF THE NEW YEAR - GIFT IDEAS**

As we approach the end of the calendar and fiscal year, I encourage you to thank God for the blessings of life by making a special financial gift to ministries that benefit God's people.

**The Synod Seminarian Fund** could use your year-end gift. Each year, the Synod helps seminarians by supporting them with \$3000 each as they pursue a theological education. Our future pastors and rostered leaders need you to be generous!

**ELCA Hunger Appeal** is an outstanding witness to the God who satisfies the hungry heart. Thousands and thousands of God's people benefit from the dollars given by our individuals to fight world hunger.

**Lutheran Campus Ministry** is an important ministry of this Church.. Your gift would help! Our young people at Northern Michigan University and Michigan Technological University say thank you.

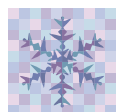
**CHANGES IN THIS NEWSLETTER**

In September, the Synod Council adopted a Communication Strategy for the Synod. We are seeking to find new and better ways to tell our Synod story to our members and to others. Starting this past fall, an electronic newsletter, "E-Notes", is

being sent to interested persons twice a month. It will not replace this paper newsletter, but will provide timely information in an electronic format to our various stakeholders. If you are not receiving and would like to have "E-Notes" in your email inbox, contact us at [ngls@nglsynod.org](mailto:ngls@nglsynod.org).

The Communication Strategy also reduces the number of printed monthly newsletter, "Notes and Quotes", from eleven to ten. A newsletter will be printed and mailed each month except for July and January. This current issue of the newsletter is your December-January newsletter.

If you have any comments or ideas on improving our communication tools, please contact our Office Manager and Newsletter Editor, Kay Benedict. She would welcome your thoughts at [kay@nglsynod.org](mailto:kay@nglsynod.org).



## TRANSITIONS

+Congratulations to **Pastor Nancy Kauppi (Grace, Gwinn)** on the Call to serve All Saints Church in Wakefield. Pastor Kauppi has been at Grace in Gwinn since 2001. Thanks be to God for her ministry at Grace, and thanks be to God for her future years at All Saints.

+God bless **Pastor Christian Muellerleile (Christ Parish, Ironwood)** and his wife **Kateri** upon the birth of their son, **Augustin Kormann Muellerleile**.

+Our sympathy to **Pearl Jalkanen** who died on November 13, 2007 in Port Washington, Wisconsin. The widow of Pastor Ralph Jalkanen, Pearl was a husband's ministry, served as President of Suomi College. May God bless her memory in our midst.



the family of **Mrs.** who died on November 13, 2007 in Port Washington, Wisconsin. The widow of Pastor Ralph Jalkanen, Pearl was a husband's ministry, served as President of Suomi College. May God bless her memory in our midst.

May God bless her memory in our midst.

"Each winter as the year grows older, we each grow older too,

The chill sets in a little colder; the verities we knew seem shaken and untrue.

Yet I believe beyond believing, that life can spring from death;

that growth can flower from our grieving;

that we can catch our breath and turn transfixed by faith.

So even as the sun is turning to journey to the north, the living flame, in secret burning,

can kindle on the earth and bring God's love to birth."

—With One Voice 628

Sunshine is in short supply these months. I am reminded each late December and early January how important the sun is as it slides beyond the horizon. The drive home from the Synod Office at 5:30 p.m. ET is now in twilight. The earth waits and God's people reflect on the season.

The earth groans for signs of hope. Thousands and thousands of parents and spouses and friends wait and hope as daughters and sons slog it out in Iraq and Afghanistan. I take a deep breath each time I hear of a "car bomb" or a new "strike on insurgents." When will our soldiers come marching home? A terrible traffic accident takes the lives of two boys who have yet to make it half way through their teen years. I have driven that particular Copper Country road where those lives were lost a hundred times. I cannot imagine the grief. What can we say? Illness comes to a loved one or old age creeps up and "the chill sets in a little colder." What does all this mean for me as one who is called by God to share "good news?"

Our ancestors in northern Europe would celebrate the "return of the light" during the last ten days of December month. They would burn large bonfires to celebrate the "news" that the end of the world had not come. They understood little about the change of seasons, except that spring was on its way once the days began to get longer.

This Advent and Christmas we are poised again to hear of light and life. We steel ourselves against the north wind and we boldly live in the Advent - Christmas faith. I am very happy to know that the One who made the universe will, in our lives, "Bring God's love to birth.

WINTER DAYS

(Winter Days Reprinted from Notes and Quotes  
December 2004)



tskrenes@nlsynod.org

# Thank You !

## World Missionary Support

Mission United, Pelkie  
 Faith, Rock  
 Trinity, Stambaugh  
 Bethel, Ishpeming  
 Calvary, Rapid River  
 Bethany, Perkins  
 Ken & Barb Johnson

## Seminarian Support

Calvary, Minocqua  
 Bethany, Perkins  
 Salem, Ironwood

## Kisarawe

Faith Lutheran Church Women, Calumet  
 Rev. Robert & Deloris Langseth

## Endowment Fund

Wayne & Eileen Stordahl

Rev. Paul & Carol Holmstrom  
 Rev. Douglas & Randi Holmgren

## Lutheran World Relief

Siloa, Ontonagon  
 Zion, Marinette  
 Bethel, Ishpeming  
 Emanuel, Skandia  
 Our Saviour's, Iron Mountain  
 Holy Trinity, Chassell  
 Calvary, Rapid River  
 First, Iron Mountain  
 Bethany, Negaunee  
 Zion, Manistique

## ELCA Disaster Funds

Bethany, Amasa  
 Bethany, Negaunee  
 Ascension, Minocqua  
 St. James, Rudyard  
 Trinity, Brevort

## Lutheran Campus Ministry

Bethany, Amasa  
 Emanuel, Skandia  
 Grace, Gwinn  
 Trinity, Brevort  
 Faith, Ishpeming

## Lay School for Mission

Trinity, Rapid River

## Mission

Larry Pagel



## Outreach

+ From the Assistant to the Bishop +  
**Pastor Jennifer Johnson Wrege**



*And Mary said:*

*“My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble estate of his servant.*

*From now on all generations will call me blessed,*

*for the Mighty One has done great things for me – holy is his name.*

*His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation.*

*He has performed mighty deeds with his arm;*

*he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.*

*He has brought down rulers from their thrones but have lifted up the humble.*

*He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty.*

*He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful*

*to Abraham and his descendants forever, even as he said to our fathers.”*

**Luke 1:46-55**

Brandon is autistic. He is also my grandson. He is a delight, a gift, and a wonderful teacher. He is eight years old. Several weeks ago, Brandon, his twin brother Blake, Papa (my husband) and I were shopping for birthday presents for Blake and Brandon’s mom. Blake knew exactly what he wanted to get for his mom - jewelry, EXPENSIVE jewelry. While Blake and I were negotiating the budget for his mom’s gift, Brandon wandered around the aisles taking stock of all that was displayed in the jewelry department at an Appleton Shopko. While Blake looked over the displays of less costly bracelets, earrings, and necklaces, I made my way over to Brandon to help him pick out his gift for his mom.

At least at this particular moment, picking out a gift turned out to be a bit of a challenge for Brandon. He deeply loves his mom. But the process of selecting a gift from all those choices was pushing him into overload. As I encouraged him to look at yet another panel of bracelets, he took my hand, looked into my eyes and with his

whole heart said, “Grandma, how about we go into my world.”

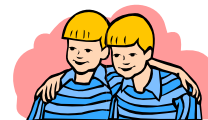
His question drives me to consider more deeply into what it means that Jesus calls me into God’s kingdom. As Mary proclaims in her song from Luke 1, things are different there - the proud are scattered, rulers are brought down from their thrones, and the rich are sent away empty. On the other side of it, the humble are lifted up and the hungry are filled with good things. It’s kind of up-side-down from how we generally think of these things in the world where we live.

In my heart I hear God’s voice nudging me, “How about we go into my world?” As I hear the question, I think of the folks for whom the money the Salvation Army bell ringers will assist. I wonder about senior citizens who may be lonely and homebound, perhaps even forgotten. Kids who are neglected, abused, unloved or discarded cross my mind. I am awed by God who gathers up the lost, the lonely, the neglected, and the unloved into his arms, loving them into the kingdom. It is humbling to even consider that God invites you and me to be a part of this great gathering.

During Advent and Christmas, we will be thinking about how Jesus comes so dramatically into this world in such a way that we also enter into God’s world. “Stir up our hearts, O Lord, and come,” we pray during Advent. Not so long ago, I spent time with a family gathered around the hospital bed of their mother and grandmother. She was dying. Almost the entire family was there from a two year old great-granddaughter to a 60 something eldest son. They were saying goodbye. They were sharing expressions of love and thanksgiving for so many rich and good times. They were, of course, crying. Occasionally, they couldn’t help themselves - they laughed about something that happened in the past. They sang songs. They stood and sat and waited for quite a long time. I didn’t have these words then, but now I do. I can imagine Jesus standing at her bedside, reaching out His hand and saying to her, “How about we go into my world?” And, I can see her nodding, reaching to Him, and entering a whole new world.

“How about we go into my world?” Where might this question lead you?

Blessings!



## **Pastoral Vacancies and Interim Pastors**

**Bethel, Ishpeming - Associate Pastor Vacancy**  
**Prince of Peace, Marquette - Pastor Rell Spickerman**  
**Trinity, Stambaugh & Bethany, Amasa - Pastor Doug Johnson**  
**All Saints, Wakefield - Pastor John Kuziej**  
**Central, Menominee - Pastor Ken Michaelis**  
**Pioneer Lake, Conover - Pastor Dorothy Lindstrom**  
**Bethany, Covington & Trinity, Trout Creek - Pastor Marlin Snyder**  
**Holy Cross, Baraga - Pastor Ted Koehl**  
**Bethany, Norway - Pastor Earnest Ness**  
**Bethel, Cedarville & Zion, Allenville - Pastor George Kaiser**  
**Bethany, Mohawk - Pastor Peter Vorhes**  
**Our Redeemer, Newberry - Pastor LaVonne Stephenson**  
**Messiah, Marquette - Senior Pastor Vacancy**  
**Immanuel, Escanaba - Pastor Jonathan Schmidt**

Both calendar and fiscal year mission support giving remain above 2006 levels. We truly give thanks to God for our congregations who have given in such a generous and timely manner. Through your good stewardship, we are able to carry forward God's mission in our Synod and around the world. "When I remember you in my prayers, I always thank my God because I hear of your love for all the saints and your faith toward the Lord Jesus." (Philemon 1:4-5)

As of 10/31/07	2006	2007	\$ Change	% Change
Pledged Amount	1,033,577	1,045,301	+11,724	+1.1%
Amount Received	740,635	787,232	+46,597	+6.3%
Designated Gifts	138,117	143,802	+5,685	+4.1%



**NORTHERN GREAT LAKES  
SYNOD**

1029 N. Third St., Ste. A  
Marquette, MI 49855

Phone: 906-228-2300  
Fax: 906-228-2527  
E-mail: [nngls@nnglsynod.org](mailto:nngls@nnglsynod.org)



Non Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Marquette, MI 49855  
Permit No. 22

Label

---

**WE'RE ON THE WEB**

**[WWW.NGLSYNOD.ORG](http://WWW.NGLSYNOD.ORG)**

---

**Volumes 20 & 21 - Issues 12 & 1 /  
Dec. 2007 & Jan. 2008**

**ON-LINE DEVOTIONS FOR DECEMBER  
2007 / JANUARY 2008**

**[www.prayfaithfully.org](http://www.prayfaithfully.org)**

*December 2-8 / Carol Ontto, Faith, Rock*

*December 9-15 / Pastor Doug Johnson, Bethlehem, Florence*

*December 16-22 / Members of Trinity, Rhineland*

*December 23-29 / Bishop Thomas Skrenes*

*December 30 - January 5 / Pastor Steve Gauger, Calvary, Rapid River*

*January 6-12 / Susan Anderson, Sharon, Bessemer*

*January 13-19 / Kathy Magnuson, Faith, Ishpeming*

*January 20-26 /*

*Jan. 27 - Feb. 2 / Pastor Penny Olson, Siloa, Ontonagon & Faith, White Pine*